

ATOMIC ENERGY EDUCATION SOCIETY ANUSHAKTINAGAR,
MUMBAI

CLASS XI ENGLISH CORE

THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY

SALIENT FEATURES Module 1/2

Khushwant Singh's parents left him in the village with his grandmother and went to live in the city to carve their niche.

Kushwant Singh's grandmother was an old lady, very religious and pious.

The author shared an intimate bond with his grandmother. They shared a loving relationship.

Each day the grandmother woke him up, dressed him, provided all his primary needs and escorted him to school.

The school was attached to the temple and he was taught the alphabets morning prayer and scriptures.

While Kushwant Singh was at school, the grandmother used to read the scriptures in the temple.

Once Kushwant Singh's parents were well-settled, he and his grandmother also went to the city.

Though they shared a common room, the shift proved to be a downward decline in their relationship.

In the city, Khushwant Singh attended an English school. He became almost self-reliant, got ready all by himself and travelled in a motor bus.

Grandmother despised, detested and disapproved whatever he learnt - English words and topics of Western Science and specifically Music.

The grandmother could no longer accompany him to his school nor help him in his studies. However, they shared the same room.

When the author went to the University, he was given a separate room, and the last link of their relationship got completely snapped.

Grandmother kept herself busy from sunrise to sunset in spinning the wheel and in her prayers.

Her favourite part of the day was feeding the sparrows with grains and bread crumbs.

When the author went abroad for higher studies, the grandmother came to see him off at the station.

She showed no emotions and was not even sentimental. All that she did was a loving peck on his forehead.

Kushwant Singh recalled the moist of the kiss and thought that it would be their last physical touch.

But that was not so, as when the author came back after five years, he was received by his grandmother at the station.

She remained unchanged and did not look a day older. She hugged him, said nothing but continued with her prayer beads and chants.

In the evening, she collected the women folk of the neighbourhood and celebrated her grandson's homecoming,

Beating an old dilapidated and sagging Dhol, she sang of warriors homecoming and got exhausted by her overstraining efforts.

It was so strange that she missed one regular thing the grandmother did not pray. On the contrary, she sang.

The grandmother fell ill the next day. The doctors diagnosed her with mild fever but she knew that her end was near.

She stopped talking and closed her eyes. She was lost in her prayers and counting the beads of her rosary.

Suddenly, the rosary fell down and her lips stopped moving. She was dead and left for heavenly abode.

Hundreds of sparrows assembled in the yard and sat quietly to mourn her death.

Kushwant Singh's mother offered bread crumbs. They did not even notice and did not eat the crumbs given by the author's mother.

After the grandmother's body was taken for cremation, the sparrows flew away silently.